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Testimony of Shirley Bergert¹ Before the Energy & Technology Committee Regarding House Bill #6592 An Act Concerning the Operations of the DPUC March 15, 2011

Connecticut Legal Services serves low income households in Connecticut, providing legal advice and assistance in civil matters, including the loss of utility service. These are our vulnerable neighbors at greatest risk in affording and maintaining necessary utility and energy services.

Recommended actions:

- Support sections 6 clarification regarding utility shut-offs, with additional modification in language listed below
- Support sections 19 and 20 clarifying DPUC authority to conduct hearings

This testimony only addresses sections 6, 19 and 20 of HB #6592.

Utility shut-off clarification: Section 6 clarifies the general interpretation of Conn. Gen. Stat. sec. 16-262c(b)(1) that electric and gas utility companies may not "deny" service during the winter moratorium or where a customer cannot pay his/her full account and the lack of service would be life-threatening. Current law specifically indicates service may not be terminated and a utility may not refuse to reinstate service during these periods.

There is one additional minor language addition to the last sentence which is needed to make the section consistent (highlighted language is the new addition):

Notwithstanding any other provision of the general statutes to the contrary, no electric, electric distribution or gas company, no electric supplier and no municipal utility furnishing electricity or gas shall terminate, deny or refuse to reinstate residential electric or gas service where the customer lacks the financial resources to pay his or her entire account and for which customer or a member of the customer's household the termination, denial of or failure to reinstate such service would create a life-threatening situation.

DPUC authority to conduct hearings: DPUC responsibilities have been expanded over the years. Sections 19 and 20 ensure the DPUC has full authority to conduct proceedings under oath with process available for discovery and to insist on cooperation of parties over whom the DPUC has regulatory responsibilities.

¹ Member of the Low Income Energy Advisory Board, Energy Conservation Management Board, Fuel Oil Conservation Board, and the Advisory Board for the Institute for Sustainable Energy.

